

Research Report 34
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Focus on cultural diversity: the arts in England

attendance, participation
and attitudes

Findings of a study carried out by the Office for National Statistics

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Introduction

Welcome to *Focus on cultural diversity: the arts in England*.

The importance of cultural diversity to the vitality of the arts and culture cannot be overstated. Engaging fully with the range of different cultures, communities and complex identities that make up the face of contemporary England is imperative for everyone, for social, moral and business reasons. The 2001 Census showed just how much England is changing. As cultural facilitators, we need to be responsive to these changes and proactive in building bridges of understanding and awareness between communities.

At Arts Council England, we have articulated our commitment to cultural diversity in our current manifesto *Ambitions for the arts*. The information from this research will be invaluable in helping us to place cultural diversity as a 'central value... running through all of our programmes and relationships'. We hope our partners, clients and colleagues in other agencies and government departments will find the information helpful in formulating, reinterpreting and implementing their own policies and positive action measures.

Some of the findings in this research are striking. Policy-makers and service providers alike will be intrigued by the extent of attendance and participation in cultural activity among all ethnic groups. The information on attendance at culturally specific artforms will aid programmers and audience development agencies in refining their activities. Likewise, the findings on how levels of participation vary by gender in certain ethnic groups can be a valuable tool for re-imagining how we engage with different communities. The striking differences in how various ethnic groups support the arts can provide us all with valuable opportunities for developing new partnerships and new ways of engaging with our culturally diverse population.

This research project owes its success to the efforts of several people, especially in Arts Council England, Resource (the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries) and the UK Film Council. Particular thanks are due to the members of the Steering Group who oversaw the project: Sue Howley and Simon Matty from Resource; Jim Barratt from the UK Film Council; Ben Jeffries from Arts

Council England, London; Mary Wright from Arts Council England, Yorkshire; and Ann Bridgwood, Phil Cave, Clare Fenn and Adrienne Skelton from the national office of the Arts Council. Valuable administrative assistance was provided by Caroline Scott and Luisa Bondi.

Most importantly, I would like to thank those members of the public who willingly gave their time and effort to make the research a success. The biggest way we can repay those efforts is by making the most meaningful use of the information. I am certain that significant progress will have been made in those aspects of cultural diversity identified here when we carry out future surveys.

Tony Panayiotou
Director of Diversity, Arts Council England

Executive summary

Introduction

The results of the most recent Census provide evidence of the diversity of England's population. In 2001, Black and minority ethnic groups represented 9.1% of the total population in England. Asian or British Asian residents formed the largest group (4.6%), followed by 'Black or British Black' (2.3%) and 'mixed' (1.3%), with the smallest group being 'Chinese', at 0.9%. The Black and minority ethnic population is younger than the white population. It is also characterised by great diversity of education, income and religion. The mixed ethnicity group, one of the youngest and most rapidly growing ethnic groups, is particularly diverse, comprising people from a wide range of backgrounds.

The three partners in this research, Arts Council England, Resource (the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries) and the UK Film Council, all place cultural diversity at the heart of their work. Arts Council England's *Ambitions for the arts 2003–2006* lists cultural diversity as one of its five priorities. In 2002, the Arts Council earmarked £29 million from the lottery-funded Arts Capital Programme for Black, Asian and Chinese-led organisations.

Other current initiatives to improve funding and opportunities for Black, Asian and Chinese artists and arts organisations include the **decibel** project, the development of work resulting from the 2001 Eclipse conference for theatre managers and Board members and the diversity strand of the New Audiences Programme. The UK Film Council launched its cultural diversity strategy in autumn 2003. Resource stresses that museums, archives and libraries have an important role to play in promoting the knowledge, understanding and value of diverse cultures, faiths and histories.

This research provides us with the first national information on how our culturally diverse population engages with the arts and culture. Policy-makers, practitioners, venue managers, programmers, curators and those working in arts marketing, audience development, arts and cultural education and lifelong learning all need reliable, up-to-date information if they are to engage with diverse audiences in a strategic and targeted

way. However, although there have been local or small-scale studies of Black and minority ethnic attendance and participation, there has never previously been a large-scale, national study.

To start to address this gap, in 2002, the three research partners commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to carry out a survey of attendance, participation and attitudes to the arts and culture among Black and minority ethnic adults in England. The results of this survey were combined with those from a previous study carried out in 2001 (Skelton et al, 2002) to present a picture of cultural engagement across all the largest ethnic groups, including white people, in England. In total, 7,667 people were interviewed.

The report

The report presents information on attendance at a wide range of arts events and cultural venues in the 12 months before interview, participation in cultural activities and attitudes towards the arts and culture, including views on public funding. It also provides information on how people access the arts through broadcast and recorded media. People taking part in the survey were asked to which ethnic group they thought they belonged, using the Census 2001 classifications. As mentioned, the Black and minority ethnic population is a diverse one, with the mixed ethnicity group being particularly diverse; readers should bear this in mind when interpreting the results in this report.

Support for the arts and culture

The results of the survey show that, although there were some differences between individual ethnic groups, there were very high levels of engagement with and support for the arts and other cultural activities. For example, when asked whether, 'Arts and cultural projects should receive public funding', the following proportions agreed:

- 90% of the Black or British Black sample
- 85% of people of mixed ethnicity
- 79% of Asian or British Asians
- 75% of Chinese and other ethnic groups
- 74% of white respondents

Similarly, very high proportions agreed that, 'The arts play a valuable role in the life of the country.' This was true of:

- 86% of the Black or British Black sample
- 82% of people of mixed ethnicity
- 78% of Chinese and other ethnic groups
- 75% of Asian or British Asians
- 73% of white respondents

Attendance

Those taking part in the survey were shown a list of events or cultural venues and asked if they had been to any of them in the 12 months before interview. Attendance was high in all ethnic groups. The proportion who had attended at least one arts event in the last year ranged from 91% of the mixed ethnicity group to 77% of those describing themselves as Asian or British Asian.

Going to see a film at a cinema or other venue was the most widespread activity. The following had all been to a film in the last year:

- 82% of people of mixed ethnicity
- 66% of Asian or British Asians
- 63% of the Black or British Black sample
- 60% of Chinese and other ethnic groups
- 56% of white respondents

Other interesting findings include:

- Asian or British Asian respondents were most likely to have attended a culturally specific festival (32%). This was particularly true of those identifying themselves as Indian, 41% of whom reported doing this
- just over one-third of interviewees had visited a museum or art gallery. People of mixed ethnicity (44%), white (36%) and Black or British Black (32%) respondents were more likely to have visited than Asian or British Asian respondents (25%)
- the highest proportions of those visiting or using libraries in the last year were found among Black African, and Pakistani and Bangladeshi respondents (60% and 58% respectively), and the lowest among Black Caribbean people (41%) and people of mixed ethnicity (42%)

- although the mixed ethnicity group had one of the lowest levels of attendance at a public library, this group was the most likely to have attended events connected with books or writing

There appeared to be a relationship between ethnic group and attendance at culturally specific dance events. For example, attendance at African dance was highest among the Black African sample (8%), while attendance at South Asian dance was most widespread (again, at 8%) among Indian respondents.

Age and gender

Attendance at arts events is strongly age-related. However, there were clear differences between respondents from different ethnic groups that were not attributable to age. For example:

- among people of mixed ethnicity, 96% of those aged 16–44 and 80% of those aged 45 and over had attended at least one event
- among Asian or British Asian respondents, the corresponding proportions were 83% and 60%

Levels of attendance also varied by gender. For example:

- among Black African respondents, more men than women (88% compared with 72%) had attended arts events in the previous year
- 88% of women in the Indian sample had attended at least one event, compared with 77% of the men

Reasons for and barriers to attending arts and cultural events

People were asked about their reasons for attending events and whether they would like to go to more.

- Wanting to see a 'specific performer or event' was mentioned by 28% of people of mixed ethnicity, 27% of Black or British Black respondents, 13% of Asian or British Asian respondents and 10% of Chinese and other ethnic groups
- Those identifying themselves as Pakistani or Bangladeshi were the most likely to say that one of their reasons for attending was as part of a social event; 35% gave this as a reason

The majority of respondents in all ethnic groups said that they would be interested in attending more – either more events, or more frequently. The proportions saying this were:

- 85% of Black or British Black respondents
- 82% of the mixed ethnicity group
- 71% of those from Chinese and other ethnic groups
- 70% of Asian or British Asian respondents
- and 62% of the white sample

People were also asked what prevented them from attending (more). The most common reason was 'lack of time', mentioned by, for example, 65% of people of mixed ethnicity and 61% of Asian or British Asians.

- People of mixed ethnicity (45%) and Chinese and other ethnic groups (42%) were most likely to cite cost as a barrier
- Respondents who described themselves as Black African (10%) or Pakistani or Bangladeshi (8%) were the most likely to say that concerns about feeling 'uncomfortable or out of place' prevented them attending

Participation

People interviewed for the survey were asked whether they took part themselves, as opposed to seeing performances or work by other people, in a wide range of artistic and cultural activities. The results showed high levels of participation in the last year, ranging from 95% of people of mixed ethnicity to 80% of the Asian or British Asian sample.

Age and gender

As with attendance, there were age differences in participation.

- Among the Chinese and other ethnic groups, 93% of those aged 16–44 had participated in at least one arts activity, compared with 75% of those aged 45 or over
- A similar pattern was seen among those who described themselves as Asian or British Asian: 85% of 16–44 year olds compared with 68% of those aged 45 or over reported doing one or more activities

Among white, Black or British Black and Asian or British Asian respondents, women were more likely than men to have taken part in at least one activity.

Participation in specific activities

- Black or British Black respondents were most likely to have sung to an audience or rehearsed for a musical performance in the last 12 months (14% had done so, compared with 6% of both the mixed ethnicity group and Chinese and other ethnic groups, 4% of white respondents and 3% of Asians or British Asians)
- Among those who had sung, performed or played a musical instrument, more than two in five (44%) Black Caribbeans and almost one in four (24%) Black Africans had sung or performed choral music
- Black or British Black respondents were most likely to belong to choirs or vocal groups – 15% of Black Africans and 11% of Black Caribbeans mentioned this
- Black or British Black respondents were more likely than other ethnic groups to have done African, South Asian or Chinese, jazz or street dance in the last 12 months (22%). Black Africans (29%) were more likely than Black Caribbeans (16%) to have done this kind of dancing
- A higher proportion of younger people had created original works of art or animation using a computer. In particular, 19% of Black or British Black and 18% of Asian or British Asian respondents aged 16–44 had done this, compared with 5% of older people from both groups
- Craft activities were more common among women than men. For example, the proportions of women doing textile crafts ranged from 26% of the mixed ethnicity group to 12% of the Black or British Black groups. Only 1% of men from each ethnic group, however, reported engaging in textile crafts

Accessing the arts through audio-visual media

More than 90% of all ethnic groups had accessed the arts through a variety of audio-visual media – CD, mini disc, tape or record; television, video or DVD; or radio – in the last four weeks or on the internet in the last 12 months.

- Among white, mixed ethnicity, Black or British Black respondents, and Chinese and other ethnic groups, the most common medium – mentioned by more than 80% – was CD, mini disc, tape or record. Among Asian or British Asian people, however, the highest proportion (87%) had listened to the arts on radio

- Rock or pop music was the most commonly viewed or heard genre on CD, radio and television. This was true for all groups, with the exception of Asian or British Asian respondents, who were more likely to have listened to Asian radio stations than rock or pop on other radio stations (53% compared with 46%). Some may, of course, have listened to rock or pop on these Asian stations
- The proportion of respondents listening to jazz and classical music on CD, mini disc, tape or record, or on the radio during the four weeks before interview was generally higher than the proportion experiencing the same music at a live venue during the last 12 months
- More than one in five people of mixed ethnicity and from Chinese and other ethnic groups had used the internet to buy tickets or find out about arts events in the last year

Attitudes towards the arts and libraries

We have already seen that there were high levels of support for the arts among all ethnic groups. There was also widespread recognition of the value of the arts and libraries.

- 87% of Black or British Black and 84% of mixed ethnicity respondents thought that 'Arts from different cultures contribute a lot to this country', as did 71% of white respondents and Chinese and other ethnic groups

When asked whether 'All school children should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument or participate in other arts activities', the following proportions agreed:

- 99% of people of mixed ethnicity
- 98% of white respondents
- 97% of Black or British Black people
- 91% of Asian or British Asian respondents
- 90% of Chinese and other ethnic groups

There was also strong support for libraries.

- Nine out of ten respondents, apart from Chinese and other ethnic groups (85% of whom thought this), agreed or strongly agreed that libraries provide a valuable service to their local community